

of their tracks from the spot where they entered the county until they struck the turnpike half a mile outside of town, fifty acres of ground six miles outside of the town which they proposed turning into an Electric Park, and four acres centrally located in Rock Springs. The last proviso was what seemed to be worrying the villagers. The other two came under the jurisdiction of the county authorities. The four acres, according to the handbill, were to become the site of car barns and a power plant. The question was to be decided at a meeting of the Town Council on Tuesday evening a week, the day after the Mighty Harkins Show played there.

I was not interested in all this; but felt my curiosity aroused by a footnote at the bottom of the dodger. It read:

N. B.—If this proposition is accepted by the city of Rock Springs, \$100,000 worth of stock must be subscribed for by its residents on or before July 1 of the present year. The proposed line will cost in the neighborhood of \$350,000. To prove that we mean business the incorporators will exhibit publicly \$250,000 in cash at eight p. m. Monday, June 12, the day before the council meets.

**YOU CAN SEE IT! FEEL IT! HANDLE IT!**  
**MONEY TALKS!!!!**

The depot bus was outside and, shoving the paper into my pocket, I grabbed my bag, hopped in, and was on my way.

**A WEEK** later, on my return, the streets were filled with holiday throngs of circusgoers, and I was too busy to ask about the trend of opinion as to railway improvements. In fact, I didn't think about it. By seven o'clock that night the cars were loaded and the train under way. There was a long jump to the next stand, and in order to make it Harkins had advertised and given only the afternoon show. The Big Top had been packed at the single performance, and the "Kid" or sideshow had done a land office business. Sam had half a Pullman car fitted up for his own use, and we sat far into the night reading and talking of things in general. Shut off from the rest of the people, we were uninterrupted except once by Timson, the equestrian director, who knocked on the door just as we were getting ready to turn in.

"That dago Angelotti ain't aboard, Boss," said he.

"He isn't, eh? Missed the train, I expect. He'll catch the morning accommodation. Fine him next time he does this. Goodnight, Timson."

"Queer bug, Angelotti," said Sam as he turned the lock. "He's the sword swallower in the sideshow. Works for thirty dollars a week. Regular price for sword swallowers is fifty. Insisted on stateroom to himself before he signed up. Figured I was saving more by letting him have it. Third time he's missed the train since we left New York. Always on hand the next day, though. Don't understand him. He's an artist in his way. Real drawing card. Pleasant dreams, Tom. We breakfast at eight."

I mention these uninteresting and seemingly irrelevant matters not because they struck me forcibly at the time, but because of their bearing on the queer happenings of the next few days. The Mighty Harkins Show continued on its money-making way, aided and abetted by warm weather, sunshine, and prosperous communities.

**TWO** evenings after the chat with Sam I learned that

somebody wished to speak to me over the long distance telephone. The operator said the call came from Rock Springs, and I thought she was crazy until I heard Jack McCann's voice through the receiver. Then I thought I had lost my senses. He told me I hadn't, that John Henry McCann, Jr., of New York and Newport, was really in the miserable village, and that he was there on a newspaper story which so far had not percolated into any office but his.

"Tom," said he over the phone, "if I can unravel this tangle I'll beat the country and will take my destined place in the detective niche of the Hall of Fame. Little children a hundred years from now will speak of McCann the way the brats of nowadays talk of Old Sleuth, Nick Carter, Dupin, and the two Bills—Pinkerton and Burns."

I asked him what Rock Springs had to do with it.

"What has Rock Springs to do with it?" he cried.

"Why, everything! Do you think I would stay in a tank town like this if it wasn't the microscope through which all the discovery is to be done?"

"Listen! Did you happen to hear of an electric railway proposition while you were flitting through this metropolis? You did, eh? Then you probably recall that the promoters advertised that they would exhibit two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash to the citizens, not only exhibit it, but allow the horny-fisted rustics to touch it, smell it, handle it. Well, they kept their promise, and some wise Aleck copped all the dough. Yessir—twenty-five ten-thousand-dollar banknotes! Did it in a room packed with people, and right under the noses of the private detectives and half the village constabulary."

"Electric lights all around, capitalist on platform telling how his railroad was going to make Rock Springs another New York, Chicago, and St. Louis rolled into one, waves bundle of bills, says something about money talking, offers to let villagers feel of the banknotes to prove he and his pals are on the level, when—Zowie! somebody in the rear yells 'Fire!' smoke is discovered coming through a window, capitalist reaches for roll, puts it into his pocket, becches his audience to remain quiet, and everybody retires gracefully while the frame building burns down. When he reaches the bank, which has kept open to permit him to safeguard his quarter of a million, he finds that he has nothing but his watch, carfare, and twenty-five ten-thousand-dollar bills in stage money, the kind Eddie Foy used in 'The Billionaire.'

"Wise guy took Bank's the 'phony paper. Doesn't notify the local authorities, but wires his headquarters, who ship down trainload of detectives. Town is smeared with deaths at this minute. Town folks aren't wise to what's happened. They're still talking about the fire. My office learned of the frisking through New York police, and shipped me out. Whoever pinched the cash can't possibly spend it or change a bill. Every bank has been tipped off to the numbers of the notes.

My job was easier, and I headed the way to the deserted restaurant.



"And, Tom, as sure as you're a foot high, a woman turned the trick! I've spoken to every man who was in the room; they're all local characters and too green to be very dishonest. A lot of dames were present, and from among them some feather-fingered lady must have—Hello! Hello! Hello, Tom! Say, I've got to ring off. Some guy is hanging around this booth. I'm afraid he'll hear me. Yes, I have your route. I'll write. Thanks, old fellow, I'm going to try to crack this nut. Isn't it a pippin? Mum's the word. S'long."

**G**RANTING the fact—there is no use denying it—that Jack McCann is a bright, wideawake young man and a reporter of far more than ordinary parts (he proved that by doping out a woman as the probable thief), he nevertheless ceased to exert more than a secondary influence in the Rock Springs Money Juggle the moment he put the telephone receiver

back on the hook. From now on I'm the guy! And don't think I'm bragging. I'd rather be a good press agent than a good detective. It's safer. But Chance made me a crime ferret once at least, and Chance, doubtless, saw me safely through the mess. Give Chance the credit if you want to. You do that, and I'll continue to pat myself on the back.

That night I had planned to spend on the car with Sam; for I was to remain with the show two more days before going on ahead. But a drizzling rain had started when I was telephoning, or rather when Jack was, and being without a raincoat or umbrella I elected to remain in the Derby Hotel (Derby was the name of the town too), and catch a train for the next stand early in the morning. After registering and writing some letters I purchased a magazine and went to my room.

It must have been ten o'clock or thereabouts when I threw myself on the bed to read, and perhaps I continued reading until midnight before I dozed off. I was awakened by a noise in an adjoining room. Of what time it was I have no idea; but it must have been very late, for my window, opening on the square, admitted no sound of ambulant alcoholism, a condition that usually obtains until at least three in the morning after the circus in all towns—big, little, dry, and wet.

A man and a woman were arguing, and their remarks, at first unintelligible, resolved into a steamship discussion. They were talking about going abroad. The man was for Central America, and mentioned some person he knew in New Orleans, an officer on a fruit line, who could arrange for tickets. The woman, who seemed less excited than the man, insisted on Europe, and wished to start from Quebec.

"The Cretic sails Wednesday," said she. "I will be aboard her. If you wish to remain, all right. Me for the Cretic!"

I heard no more, because I was not interested. Still half asleep, I slid into complete coma with the aid of the patterning rain, and knew no more until the morning sunshine, streaming through the window, struck my face, brought me to consciousness, caused me to look at my watch and hop out of bed. It was nine o'clock. An hour later I was on a rattler headed for the next stand. So was Angelotti, the sideshow man, who told me he had missed the circus train by half a minute.

**I REACHED** the town just before the parade started. Settled with the newspapers, reported at the lot, and after the night show was with Sam in his car. As I recall it we had nothing in particular to discuss, except the weather, and it didn't take us long to exhaust that subject, climb out of our dusty clothes and into our two bathrobes.

We were reading—at least I was—when a rap came on the door that separated Sam's apartment from the Kinkers in the fore end of the car. Sam unlocked and opened the door.

"Hello, Angelotti!" said he. I can see him now shading his eyes with his left hand from the glow of the electric lamp overhead. "Hello, Angelotti! What's the matter?"

A little man was Angelotti, a very little man. He came in with his hat off and his eyes blinking. "Ef you please, Meester Harkins," said he, "ef you please, I queet ze nex' town."

"You what?" yelled Sam.

"I queet, ef you please." And the little fellow stroked his hat and blinked some more.

"The blazes you do!"

"Yes, I queet," very soft and very low.

Something about the man made me lay down "Cabbages and Kings," which I was reading for the fourth time.

"Listen!" said Sam. "Didn't it ever occur to you that I have a contract with you, that you have promised to work for me until the circus season closes, that you have promised in writing? Do you remember that?"

"Yes," and he grinned; "but I queet."

"Not on your life! You see me in the wagon tomorrow before parade. Don't think you're back in sunny Italy, the home of red paint and the ripe banana! And you're fined half a week's salary for missing the train last night. I'm running this show! Goodnight."

"One moment!" I cut in just as the little man was gliding through the door.

He stopped and turned a scowling face toward me. Sam looked surprised.

"Where do you expect to go—providing Mr. Harkins lets you go?"

"I go back to Italia—to my own countree," he replied and grinned again.

"Sail from Quebec or New York?"

His black eyes pierced mine and tried to read the lining of my skull. "From Quebec, Signor—ef Meester Harkins permit."

There was a lot of silence in the compartment after he left. I was thinking hard; but not so hard that I couldn't feel Harkins' eyes on me.

"Sam," said I finally, "when you leave the car in the morning will you go alone and give me a chance to frisk that dago's stateroom—you said he traveled de luxe? Thanks. And will you do me the favor of having

*Continued on page 18*